The work leading to this report was supported by funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.
This study investigated the history, theory and operations of the communications system in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, primarily during the period 1985-90. Among the subjects that were considered were the history of the press; the institutions and interest groups who write the news; factors affecting the news, such as journalistic practice and professionalism, technology, party interests, censorship and law; the consumers of the news and their impact on the process of communication, especially through public opinion; and several other factors, including the international dimensions of the process.

Five years ago, the media of Eastern Europe, although clearly different from one another, nonetheless shared a number of common attributes under a general label of "Soviet Communist press system." Today, these systems have far less in common except that almost all of them are facing serious economic problems. The most important finding of this study is that with some exceptions the mass media during this period have not themselves been independent agents of change. To some degree they have been used by individuals or agents to help promote change. In the majority the mass media themselves have been subject to the press of change. For the public at large, the
mass media have magnified the process of change and they have legitimized the process. It was already clear to critical observers by the late 1970s that Marxist-Leninist theories of the press were becoming dysfunctional under conditions of a modern mass communication system in an already mobilized and urbanized society. Lenin's theory of the press, especially as developed under Stalin, was simply a cover for state and party control. When the controls were removed, the theory collapsed. Yet the issue is more complex. It is misleading to separate theory from practice. The practice of journalism and propaganda not only was designed to create a new communist man and help carry out party policy, but it was also designed to repress political dissent and to involve its participants as active supporters of the communist system. In the process journalists in varying degrees in these three countries developed a sense of professionalism that involved a commitment toward truth and the betterment of society.

During most of Communist rule in these countries there were several means by which authorities could exert control, including censorship, self-censorship, personnel selection, rewards and guidance. More recently, modern methods of influence have been developed, particularly in the form of public relations, including the creation of information offices and press spokesmen. New methods of control have become available to those in a position to wield them. One of the most important is the allocation of supplies and equipment. Newsprint and printing
capacity are in short supply. Until recently they were a monopoly of the communist party in all three countries. In Poland that monopoly has been abolished and largely replaced by a free market. That has boosted prices ten-fold, but depressed readership substantially, sometimes leading to bankruptcy. Most of the printing capacity and other technological infrastructure remains backward. Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union are beginning to undergo the same process. Most Western assistance to these countries to date has been in the form of journalistic training. Far more important in the long run would be helping these countries address their material shortages. This could best be done through the development of joint investments by Western companies designed to help provide the economic wherewithal and the technical assistance to make East European mass media competitive and resistant to foreign takeover or control. This should be done through non-profit undertakings or through arrangements designed to protect domestic editorial independence. Tax credits should be provided to support these non-profit initiatives.

The institutional composition of the printed press in these three countries has changed enormously during the last five years, with the most extensive changes taking place in 1989 and 1990. Hundreds of new publications have sprung up, while similar numbers have been forced out of business. The most important newspapers in each country are not the same ones they used to be. Pravda has not been totally superseded, but people pay equal or
more attention to Ogonek, Argumenty i fakty, Moscow News, Izvestia and other publications. Gazeta Wyborcza has replaced Trybuna ludu as the most important newspaper in Poland. In Prague, Lidove noviny has displaced Rude pravo as the most influential Czech paper. Several papers compete for the leading position in Slovakia.

The content of the papers has expanded enormously with the removal of almost all old taboos. History, economic and social issues have come in for more detailed examination. Foreign affairs and defense issues have been discussed much less. While not completely ignored, ethnic and national conflicts have received less coverage than other subjects, at least in the central press. The communist party and KGB, while not immune from criticism, still are not often the subject of news stories. Editors have also brightened the layout of periodicals and made them more graphically attractive.

Television, the most visible and widespread of mass media in these countries, has changed more slowly because until very recently it has remained a government monopoly, both in production and distribution. Television’s main role has been as a barometer of the extent of openness. It validates the process of glasnost and verifies its agenda.

Alternative sources of news, particularly samizdat, have not disappeared despite the spread of glasnost. In Poland during the 1980s they played a major role in forcing a more open official journalism. In the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, until
recently, they were symbolic in a small way of a part of mass communications independent of party control. The revolution in Czechoslovakia has made their role immaterial. In the Soviet Union they have continued to grow because they provide a forum for subjects for which the mainstream press has little room. Foreign broadcasting’s impact in these countries has diminished substantially, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The United States will soon have to face the reality of either closing Radio Free Europe or incorporating it in Voice of America. The mission of Radio Free Europe has been accomplished.

Audience interest in the mass media has increased substantially. So has the attention of the governing parties to public opinion. Public opinion institutes have rapidly expanded their activities in order to inform both governments, political parties and the public. In a period of rapid change, however, they are less helpful in informing public policy, although they serve a useful purpose in promoting public transparency.

Journalists under the new conditions are defining new roles for themselves, some as politicians, others as reporters or writers. Some are unemployed. Although still dependent on changes in training and socialization, professionalism is likely to assume greater importance. The economics of mass communication in free market societies will diminish the political role of journalism, a force which will help promote journalistic professionalism.
In late September 1986, the Soviet press agency TASS reported the attempted hijacking of a domestic airliner in Ufa. Two hijackers--TASS called them armed drug addicts--killed two policemen and two passengers before themselves dying "as a result of resolute measures taken by personnel of the state security police and the regular police." The incident happened sometime on a Saturday. The TASS report came two days later. Most Western observers, especially reporters, found this "relative promptness" to be part of Mikhail Gorbachev's then new policy of glasnost (openness). But the story still came 48 hours after the even happened. As it did for a third to a half of the material in Soviet newspapers at the time, Only TASS provided news of the hijacking.²

The uncertainty about the meaning of glasnost' is one of the reasons why it took the Western press a long time to acknowledge that Gorbachev did not want the press to be a tightly-controlled agency of the party and government. Yet evidence of his thinking was visible even before Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet communist party in March 1985. Speaking to the All-Union Scientific and Practical Conference on ideology in December 1984, Gorbachev remarked that publicity, by which he meant "making things known," was "an
Integral part of socialist democracy and a norm of all public life."

Wide, prompt, and frank information is evidence of confidence in people and respect for their intelligence and feelings, and their ability to understand events for themselves. It enhances the working people's activeness. Publicity is an effective means of combating bureaucratic distortions and obliges us to be more thoughtful in our approach to the adoption of decisions and the organization of monitoring their fulfillment and to the rectification of shortcomings and omissions.³

In the same talk, Gorbachev stressed that timeliness should be an important value in both domestic and international news.⁴ But was this to be a question of "permitted dissent," or did Gorbachev have something broader in scope? Although it was evident very early that one important purpose of glasnost' was to gain the support of the Soviet intelligentsia for his program of economic reform, until 1986, the demonstrated scope of glasnost' was very limited. Only a few periodicals found editors bold enough to challenge old taboos. The press was not an agent of change.⁵ The inaction of the press is particularly interesting because there is considerable evidence to suggest that the liberalization efforts of Gorbachev, Wojciech Jaruzelski in Poland, and even Milos Jakes in Czechoslovakia were a response to pressure from below.⁶
The tragic nuclear accident at Chernobyl helped change the press. The Soviet media reaction to Chernobyl initially was slow, depending on centrally issued, not very accurate and sometimes misleading, bulletins from central authorities. Within a month, however, Soviet journalists had jumped on the story. They also rapidly widened their agenda. It is not clear, however, that it was the journalists who were doing the pushing. Rather, Gorbachev used Chernobyl as a club to stir reticent party officials and bureaucrats into adopting a more open information policy similar to that he outlined at the end of 1984. Some journalists were virtually invited to become more aggressive. Far less often did they seek on their own to extend the news agenda. Liberal editors and party officials remained crucial.

Nearly five years later, neither glasnost nor Gorbachev, or even perestroika or uskorenie cause quite the excitement they once did. It is a sign of how far things have gone both in the Soviet Union and in its former East European allies, but it also raises questions about the significance of mass communication in the changes that have swept over the lands that once seemed so monolithic. Should the mass media be seen as the press of change, the driving force that converted the once glacial pace of the area into a raging flood? Or are the media merely being swept along themselves, valiantly struggling not to fall too far behind the rapid flow of political, economic, social and national change? The answer is not a simple one.
Five years ago, the media of Eastern Europe, although clearly different from one another, nonetheless shared a number of common attributes under a general label of "Soviet Communist press system." Today, these systems have far less in common except that almost all of them are facing serious economic problems. To ascertain the place of the mass media in the process of change, this study examines the role of journalists and the mass media and their interaction with social, political, economic and national change in the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Both the differences and the similarities will be instructive.

The most important finding is that with some exceptions the mass media have not themselves been independent agents of change. To some degree they have been used by individuals or agents to help develop change. In the majority of cases the mass media themselves have been subject to the press of change. The tail is being wagged. The dog wagging the tail used to be the communist party. In the Soviet Union and Albania it still is, at least in part. In Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary it is not. In Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia the issue is more confused.

One Polish mass communications researcher in Krakow was very exercised in spring 1989 by a paper from the American Political Science Association convention of the previous fall. The paper used the term late communism. The researcher clearly recognized the message inherent in such a phrase, that the
communist period would soon be over. Systems that work do not collapse. But in Poland it was clear that the communist system was evaporating. Most Polish mass media researchers recognized that. They could not understand why anyone in April 1989 wanted to interview the editor of Trybuna ludu, the Communist party paper (which after several name changes is now simply called Trybuna), or the president of the Union of Journalists of the People’s Republic of Poland, an organization created by the regime after the declaration of martial law. The results of the elections, held a month later, confirmed the death of communism in Poland.

Marx said very little that is relevant today about the place of communications in a communist society. Much of what Lenin wrote about the press related to the specific tasks of the press in a revolutionary movement in a closed society. It was already clear to critical observers by the late 1970s that Marxist-Leninist theories of the press were becoming dysfunctional under conditions of a modern mass communications system in an already mobilized and urbanized society. Hans Magnus Enzensberger went further, arguing that media simply constituted an "empty category" of Marxist theory. According to Pavel Campeanu, it is only Western Marxist research that provided any suggestions for the field. Yet there was an unwillingness by traditionally schooled media researchers in the East European countries to admit that journalistically the emperor has no clothes because it would raise broader questions
of legitimacy. If Marxism or Marxism-Leninism had nothing important to say about the roles of contemporary journalists and mass media, it left socialist ideology as a whole more vulnerable to domestic critics. The rapid collapse of communism in 1989 has borne out their fears. What holds the Soviet Union together is no longer ideology, but a system of political power. The Leninist theory of the press as it was developed under Stalin, was simply a cover for state and party control. When the controls were removed, the theory collapsed. Like Lenin, the Socialist Communist theory of the press is dead but not yet buried. It is time now to bury the theory. The people in Moscow can decide whether or not to bury Lenin. What passed for the Soviet Communist theory of the press should be put down as simply an extreme form of authoritarian press theory, differing only in that it was not an organic development and that it was employed initially with murderous inefficiency to try to speed up the process of modernization in a backward society. Its primary purpose was command and control. It contained the seeds of its own destruction.

Yet the issue is more complex. It is misleading to separate the theory from the practice. Zhu argues that in China the practice of journalism and propaganda has several purposes, the least effective of which is shaping a new Communist man. Somewhat more effective is the promotion of Communist party policies. It is most effective in repressing political dissent. Leonid Brezhnev's policy was much like
the Chinese. Remington acknowledges that over time the Soviet communist party's efforts in journalism, mass communication and ideology became "bureaucratized and ceremonial," but stresses that its function has always been "to generate political solidarity among society's managerial, administrative, professional, scientific, and technical elites as well as to mold and guide the outlooks and actions of the larger population."11 Thus it is the participation in the process of the creation of communications and propaganda that is even more important than any persuasion that is accomplished. Curry has shown that within the confines of the theory and ideology Poland's journalists developed a sense of professionalism which they were able to use to advocate a sense of loyal opposition to the regime, an outlook which finds little justification within any Leninist theory of the press.

While glasnost in the Soviet Union has focused more Western attention on the changing role of the system of mass communications in a communist society, most communist systems were seeking to find new roles for the press for at least a decade. At first, the solutions were primarily tentative and temporary. They were often stated in national or patriotic terms. The Poles sought a specifically Polish solution. The Czechs and Slovaks emphasized that they sought a solution based on their own experience and history. Russians were the most adrift in their search for solutions. No editor or journalist has any memory of experience under a different system. They
have been more willing or have had no choice but to experiment. That explains the enormous variety of approaches to the mass media in the Soviet Union today. The subconscious, subtle signals that characterize media operations in most countries are therefore lacking and the audience can be left confused, especially when the audience had learned to believe that "the press lies."

To understand the complex interaction of media, society, government, economics and politics requires an examination of several topics.

*     *     *     *

One of the least studied topics and yet potentially most important is the course of mass media development prior to the communist assumption of power, addressing such questions as whether there was a mass press, to what degree it was entertainment oriented, and what the place of journalism was in political life prior to communist takeover. The pre-communist historical experience is frequently helpful in defining the course of present journalism and mass communication development.

In the 19th century and early 20th century, the Czech and Slovak press helped create a sense of Czech and Slovak national identity, even as it became increasingly politicized. There was little of the objective fact-based middle-class form of the press. The first commitment of most every newspaper was to the political party that sponsored it. Beginning around the turn
of the century, some of the parties began to support urban, sensationalist, non-political dailies. Not only did they attract large numbers of readers to newspapers, but they helped finance the more limited-circulation political papers. Lidove noviny, founded in Brno in 1893, developed into the most important paper and while not completely non-partisan, did develop into a very influential paper of the elite during the interwar period, a role that would be taken up by another paper of the same name in 1990.15

The nineteenth century Polish press offered an important national institution during the partitions of Polish territory among the empires of Austria, Russia and Prussia. As an institution providing employment for national elites, especially the gentry, only the church was more important than the press. The Polish press could serve as a preserver of language and a source of employment for members of the elite. The Polish press, in contrast to the Czech, developed a greater sense of opposition to the regime. At the same time the Polish press was even more political than the Czech or Slovak. It was impossible to start a political party without first starting a newspaper.

The Russian pre-Communist press experience is more complicated. The controlling role of government in Czarist times is well-known, as is the politically-minded outlook of the early press of Lenin. Less known, except in the work of
Jeffrey Brooks, Louise McReynolds and B.I. Esin, is the competitive mass circulation press developing in the last two decades of tsarist rule.\textsuperscript{16}

* * *

The communist approach to journalism was grafted onto this historical experience. Although the initial purpose of journalism in a newly communist society was mobilizational, it soon became clear that journalistic autonomy in this process was to be severely limited. Initially, because of the influx of workers, peasants and other non-journalists onto the staff of newspapers, this was not a matter of concern. Participating in the process of journalism meant participating in an ongoing revolution. But with the advent of Stalin in the USSR and the tightening of communist control in Poland and Czechoslovakia severe controls were gradually placed on the mass media. Like the rest of the society they were to become part of a well-controlled system. During most of Communist rule in these countries there were several means by which authorities could exert control on the system. These included censorship, self-censorship, personnel selection, rewards, and guidance.

Guidance can take both formal and informal forms. For example, in Czechoslovakia in spring 1989, a representative from \textit{Rude pravo} each week still attended a meeting at the Central Committee building to hear what was on the Party’s mind. The paper’s editor took this guidance into account. The communist parties have also issued official documents, such as
a resolution on the mass media, adopted by the 28th CPSU congress in July 1990, which reminded the party press in the USSR that its duty was to assist the party in carrying out its program.17

Much of the control consisted of a variety of personal rewards and threats. That control had the widest impact, although journalists were least comfortable talking about it. They had bought into the system; they had accepted the rules of the game.18 Most important was the system of rewards which richly supported the influential journalist who backed the party to the fullest. This is the area that Polish journalism tried to limit, with some success, through ideas of professionalism.

The editor held the most important position in the control mechanism. Usually the position was a nomenklatura position, subject to the approval of the party leadership at the appropriate level. Often, particularly in the Soviet Union, the editor was a politician, not a journalist. How aggressive a publication was depended substantially on the editor. In Poland, the editor represented his journalists to the outside at least as much as he represented intervention from outside to the journalists. Before 1985 that was rarely true in the Soviet Union.

Censorship was used to a much greater extent in certain times and places. Officially, Poland throughout the 1980s had greater censorship than did the Soviet Union, but the Poles
also had a much more open press. All three countries have now abolished formal censorship, although the press laws and practice in each country put considerable responsibility on the shoulders of the editor for publication of any state secrets, pornography and other such subjects. The ending of censorship has given greater rise to free regional expression in the Soviet Union, particularly to groups with national orientations. The media have reversed the pattern and are now socialist in form and nationalist in content.

In more recent times, as these countries became increasingly pluralistic, modern methods of influence, patterned along Western lines, have been developed, particularly in the form of public relations, including the creation of information offices and press spokesmen. The most famous of the press spokesmen have been Jerzy Urban in Poland during the twilight of Communist rule in the 1980s, and Gennady Gerasimov, the master of phrase-turning at the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Political parties and government organizations regularly each have their own press spokesman. As these countries became increasingly pluralistic, the political and social leaderships intensified efforts to establish public relations efforts patterned along Western lines. In Moscow, journalists were invited to a meeting of the communist party central committee secretariat. Gorbachev even proposed monthly press conferences jointly with the Presidential Council, beginning in Fall 1990.
In Prague, for instance, the president, the prime minister and the foreign minister, all have their own spokesmen, each to some degree speaking for the government. When President Havel was elected to a two-year term in July 1990, one of his first steps was to strengthen his press office led by Michael Zantofsky, his close adviser. In fact, Zantovsky’s outspoken comments to American and British journalists that same month nearly cost him his job and diminished the halo that had surrounded Havel.\footnote{21}

One of the most rapidly changing elements of control by the state involves the question of supplies and equipment. Because of all the familiar problems of centrally planned economies, in all of these countries there is a lack of newsprint and printing capacity.\footnote{22} In Poland a free market for paper has developed leading to a bidding war and driving many publications bankrupt. The press law which went into effect in the Soviet Union in August 1990 promises financial independence for publications and a similar bidding war. Prices of publications increased tenfold in Poland between 1989 and 1990. Jumps of two hundred or three hundred percent or more are expected in the Soviet Union over the next year. In Poland the price of newsprint is so high relative to potential income from advertising that expanding circulation does not necessarily lead to greater income.\footnote{23} An increase of newsprint prices in Czechoslovakia in July 1990 threatened the existence of various publications, although editors sought to avoid raising their
prices more. Trud reported in mid-1990 that it was unable to print its scheduled number of issues and distribute them to all its Soviet subscribers because of the shortage of newsprint. Printing capacity is also inadequate and the communist party still retained control over many of the printing plants in all three countries well into 1990.

* * *

Not only the three countries examined here, but also most other countries of the former Communist bloc have paid increasing attention to press law. The USSR Supreme Soviet ended at least five years of discussion of a press law when it adopted the "Law on the Press and Other Mass Information Media," June 12, 1990. The lengthy gestation period was a reflection of changing conditions within the Soviet Union. The debate that took place, initially largely behind closed doors, was both political and journalistic. Representatives of at least three outlooks offered drafts for the law. It was an independent effort by three jurists, Yuri Baturin, M.A. Fedotov, and B. L. Entin, that formed the basis for the law that was finally adopted. Taking advantage of a new law that permitted individuals to publish their own work, they used their own money and printed 5000 copies of Zakon o pechati i drugikh sredstvakh massovoi informatsii: Initiatiivni avtorskii projekt. A moderate proposal was compiled by a committee of Soviet media heads. There was also a more conservative proposal. In 39 articles, the 1990 law provides
that any individual or organization may open a newspaper, magazine, radio or television station by registration. Preliminary censorship and intervention by other officials is forbidden. The law also contains a kind of freedom of information law that requires official bodies to respond to media information requests.

The law has its shortcomings. One Soviet journalist visiting Prague in July 1990 argued that law is not terribly important in the Soviet Union. More importantly, an independent judiciary with jurisdiction and powers of enforcement would be necessary to give the law teeth. That does not yet exist. The law does not deal with the Communist party monopoly on printing plants or with the shortage of paper. In connection with their drives toward autonomy or independence, Soviet republics are adopting their own press laws, leaving unresolved the question of which law takes priority at the present time. 29

While the ending of the communist party monopoly on power in the Soviet Union has reduced the party’s direct intervention in mass media operations, much still depends on the direct controls exercised by the bureaucracy or local party organizations. This is exercised in harassment of journalists, limits on access to information, career limitations and so forth. 30 Particularly below the central level, the fate of journalists has been very much tied to the political process. The new press law promises to change that, although for journalists it means a concomitant loss of security.
Not surprisingly, the disappearance of Communist power in Eastern Europe has produced different situations. Czechoslovakia decided to postpone writing a new press law after the November 1989 revolution. Instead the co-opted parliament that served until the June 1990 elections made only a few changes in the existing 1966 law. It restored the 1968 amendments that had liberalized the 1966 law. It eliminated censorship and gave any individual or organization the right to start up a publication. It proceeded more slowly on reforming the freedom to operate independent radio and television stations because of the complex of issues involved with the state monopoly in that area. While some citizens of Czechoslovakia favor the prompt adoption of a new press law by the federal assembly freely elected in June 1990, others prefer to wait until that assembly completes the writing of a new constitution. A far more important issue to be resolved is the extent of foreign investment that will be allowed. When I asked President Havel about this, he said he did not want to replace the tension between the politician and the journalist with that between the millionaire and the journalist. He did not suggest legal prohibitions on foreign investment in mass media, however, but said he hoped that investment contracts should specifically keep investors out of the editorial side of the papers.31

Poland has long had the most moderate official control of its press system despite all that is known about its censorship system under communist rule.32 Today Poland is operating under
a press law adopted in 1984. Significant modifications have taken place since then, however. The parliament voted April 11, 1990, to abolish censorship, a measure which took effect June 6. Two weeks before the censorship vote was taken, the parliament had voted to dissolve RSW Prasa, the communist party's monopolistic publishing house. That measure took effect July 6, although its actual implementation will drag on a good deal longer because so many of its components were bankrupt or nearly so.

* * *

The institutional composition of the printed press in these three countries has changed enormously during the last five years, with the most extensive changes taking place in 1989 and 1990. Stefan Bratkowski, a leading opposition Polish journalist during the 1980s, claimed that 600 new publications had appeared in Poland alone in five months. But with cover prices rising rapidly along with the cost of living, readership is down and hundreds of publications are also being forced to close down. In all three countries licenses to publish are no longer required. With such rapid changes, the offices charged with registering the publications have insufficient time to gather publication statistics. Newspapers of various types are springing up at the central, regional, national and local levels to compete with existing publications. Competing news agencies such as Interfax have ended TASS's monopoly on official news in the Soviet Union. Interfax, which began
operations in September 1989, was established by Radio Moscow and a Soviet-French-Italian joint venture, Interquadro. The agency employs more than 100 correspondents in various places in the Soviet Union. By the use of facsimile communications, it seeks to convey information quickly and efficiently.\textsuperscript{36} Leonid Kravchenko, in a 1989 interview, already recognized that more aggressive efforts by Soviet newspapers had ended the TASS monopoly. Greater variety in all these countries has fostered greater openness because there are more truths. There are more than 8,000 newspapers in the Soviet Union, although a smaller number of dailies. In Czechoslovakia there were 30 dailies before communist rule collapsed, but it is doubtful they can all continue to exist under the new conditions. Many new papers have sprung up, too. In the past the mass media have been designed to be non-competitive, to have their own audiences. That's changing, with unpredictable results.

The most important newspapers in each country are not the same papers they used to be. In the Soviet Union \textit{Pravda} has been overshadowed by other publications, such as \textit{Ogonek}, \textit{Argumenty i fakty}, and even \textit{Izvestia}. The central committee of the communist party, in an April 1990 resolution said \textit{Pravda} must actively restructure itself, resolutely rejecting elements of dogmatic thinking, stereotypes, and conventionalism, and flesh out with real and vital content Lenin's principles of a new-type press--the press of and
for the people, free, truthful, honest, and frank, a press
that enjoys the readers' confidence, and uses language
comprehensible to all its readers.\(^{37}\)

Ivan T. Frolov, the editor, says the paper must have economic,
financial and other autonomy.\(^{38}\) But \textit{Pravda} has been the
newspaper of record and since the record of the Soviet Union
today is more than the communist party, it seems likely that
its circulation and influence will both continue to decline.

\textit{Gazeta Wyborcza} has displaced \textit{Trybuna ludy} as the most
important newspaper in Poland. One of the two successors to
the important underground paper, \textit{Tygodnik Mazowsze} (the other
is \textit{Tygodnik Solidarnosc}), \textit{Gazeta}, with 350,000–400,000 copies,
is the largest newspaper in Poland. It is read by more than a
million people each day, its circulation aided by local
supplements in major cities.\(^{39}\) Although nominally edited by
Adam Michnik, the paper's day-to-day editor is Helena Luczywo,
a former Nieman fellow and veteran of the underground press.
While the paper started as a campaign sheet for Solidarity in
the 1989 parliamentary elections, it seeks to pattern itself
after the influential French daily, \textit{Le Monde}. It is more
partisan than \textit{Le Monde}, but still sets the standard of quality
in Poland.

In Prague, \textit{Lidove noviny} has displaced \textit{Rude pravo} as the
most influential Czech paper, although the latter has
distinguished itself in 1990 as a newspaper of opposition.
\textit{Lidove noviny} seeks to be a newspaper of record and information
as well as a journal of comment, although it has too few pages to carry out all its functions well. Its circulation of several hundred thousand, limited largely by its access to newsprint, is considerably less than that of Rude pravo in its glory days. None of the Czech press circulates very widely in Slovakia, where several papers, including Verejnost' and Narodna obroda, vie for public favor.

In almost every country of Eastern Europe, economic decentralization and the creation of more market-oriented economies is introducing a new question into media institutions: who is going to pay the piper? Newspapers and magazines are facing the issue of how to pay for themselves. It introduces issues less familiar to journalists in socialist societies, such as competition for audiences, or how much entertainment is needed to guarantee an audience, or whether or to what degree advertisements should be accepted, or whether influential journals of opinion that do not reach large audiences deserve to continue. The severe shortages of newsprint in each country severely limit the range of solutions.

A new question is what to do about foreign investors when the mass media are desperately in need of cash to buy equipment and newsprint. Already Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell have bought leading publications in Hungary. In fact, Maxwell's paper used to be the official government paper. The German conglomerate Bertelsmann holds a 41 percent share in
Nepszabadsag, the former Hungarian communist party organ. There will be tension between the need for cash and the desire to remain independent.

* * *

Journalists under the new conditions are defining new roles for themselves. Some see themselves as politicians, some as reporters and some as writers. In Poland some have found themselves jobless. Society is still skeptical about journalists as anything more than extensions of political parties. Jane Curry argues that Poland’s journalists in the 1960s and 1970s became professionals by demanding for themselves the right of control over their own product. They were able to do this, she states, although to do so they had to accept the rules of the game as defined by the regime. In 1980 they looked aghast at the upstart Solidarity journalists whom they thought lacked what it takes to become a true journalist. But the feeling was reciprocated. Stefan Bratkowski, who was thrown into the Solidarity maelstrom remarked to me in the spring of 1989 that he was "authorized by my personal opinion to write what I please." In doing so he was condemning the slow development of professionalism that Curry found so positive. For Curry, the Polish journalist had a job, not a vocation. The vocation, if not politician is at least as participant in the public arena. This explains how so many journalists, such as Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, Jerzy Urban and Wieslaw Gornicki, could accept political posts and still call themselves journalists.
With journalists entering the government in other East European countries it is unclear what professionalism will mean in the future and what the role of the journalist will be. Should they be spokespersons for points of view or independent fact-organizers? Should they be hired hands for entrepreneurs? With so many journalistic jobs in jeopardy because of financial uncertainty there has been little consideration of these issues. With so many old journalists discredited and so many new journalists flooding into the profession, the defining characteristics of the journalist are in flux.

What is the place of journalism education in their training? Under communist rule, countries with more formal journalistic training tended to have journalists who were less radical once they reached the profession, even if they absorbed subconsciously in their training a commitment to truth. In a small seminar in the journalism faculty in Prague in spring 1989, more than half the students said they had chosen journalism as a profession because they liked to write. Only one person indicated a desire to participate in political life in the future. No one saw himself as a professional journalist committed to the people's right to know. Yet it was the students of the journalism faculty who were among the leaders of the movement that toppled the communists from power a year and a half later.

Journalism education has expanded rapidly in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the USSR in the last twenty years. To some degree this helped to create a sense of journalism
professionalism similar to that described by Michael Schudson as forming in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The impact has not been the same in each of the countries. Journalism education, ironically was perhaps the most influential in Czechoslovakia, a result of the regime's effort to control the personnel in journalism during "normalization" after 1968. Hundreds of outspoken journalists of the sixties lost their jobs. The numbers of young people admitted to the study of journalism to take their places increased, and close ties existed between journalism faculties and political offices. Journalism education in Czechoslovakia produced most of the journalists who joined the influential mass media. But in addition to professional skills one of the most important lessons they learned in journalism education was to play it safe. They joined the party because it was necessary and for the most part carefully avoided making challenges within their own institution and within the media at large. Today that approach is no longer viable. The journalism school at Charles University is being converted into a Faculty of Social Sciences, Economy and Publicity.

In Poland a more traditional attitude that journalists are born, not made, still exists. In addition, there was little turnover among journalists in the 1960s and 1970s so that graduates of journalism schools had little opportunity for employment. Finally, under the Gierek regime, journalism education became the provenance of research oriented scholars.
with the result that its graduates brought to potential employment no special skills. Yet, according to the Director of the Institute of Journalism of Warsaw University, there were five applicants for every two positions in the department for the entering class in the fall of 1990 at a time when thousands of Polish journalists were unemployed. Some of the students may still see journalism as a place where they can have a significant impact on what is taking place in society. Others may be hoping that by the time they finish their studies, journalism employment will again be secure. In order to address the changing political situation, the Warsaw faculty had already added instruction in religious journalism to its curriculum in 1989.

The Soviet experience is one in which the training of the journalistic managers has been largely political, while the rank-and-file have been made up of volunteers or graduates of journalism education. Since 1985 there has been an increasing number of calls for decreasing use of factory correspondents or other untrained personnel and for the expansion of opportunities in journalism education. The Bible was added to the curriculum during the 1989/90 academic year and Marxism-Leninism was dropped as a mandatory subject. "I am confident that a journalist should primarily have a broad humanities education that will help him to clarify his social orientation," Dean Yassen N. Zassoursky remarked in the spring of 1990. He was also aware that at many newspapers conditions
had not changed and energetic, ambitious young graduates would not be welcome. "Many editors do not want to have the new type of journalist in their collectives," Zassoursky said. "They need obedient implementers." With the end of the communist party monopoly in all three countries, journalism education will be a force for professionalism. How effective that force will be depends on how political the governing system will be.

* * *

Newspapers in most of these societies have traditionally had much less space than newspapers have grown to have in the West. In 1990, most of the old taboos are gone. Glasnost' is the sunshine law of communism. History, particularly in the USSR, has been given extensive treatment. Economic and social issues have also come in for more detailed examination, although the change here is not as great as in historical subjects, since there was opportunity for treatment of some of these subjects before, but the exactness and detail of the articles has changed. Foreign affairs and defense issues have been discussed much less, a not untypical approach in other countries around the world. While not completely ignored, ethnic and national conflicts and unrest have been slighted in the central press. The communist party and the KGB have also received far less attention. Greater openness can also mean less political news in the mass press. There is less analysis in the daily press. On occasion newspapers seem to consist of rewritten press releases because journalists prefer to spend
their time on the long-form analytic piece. Despite these changes, the newspapers are not effective reflections of social reality.

Another part of glasnost' is graphic. Editors have brightened the layout of periodicals and made better use of pictures. An entertainment press has developed. There has even been an explosion of erotica and sex magazines. Newspapers have taken on a wide range of ideological colors and conducted extensive debates with each other. The most pointed example was the polemical exchange inaugurated by Leningrad chemistry teacher Nina Andreyeva.

The three countries have not followed the same patterns of openness. From 1956 to 1989, even under martial law, Poland had the most open press of the three. The range of topics and opinion permitted by the authorities was extensive, but there were limits. Under the prevailing censorship regulations, these limits could be tested, either individually in discussions between editors and censors, or later, under terms of the censorship law of the early 1980s, by directly testing the censor. Despite all this, however, the popular Polish attitude was "The press lies!" The rapid expansion of the Polish underground press, beginning in the mid-1970s, demonstrated that in spite of the openness of the official press, it still could not tell the whole truth or express every opinion. The existence of this "second circulation" continued to pressure the official press to be more open and to carry on an indirect discussion with the underground.
It was under communist power that television became a mass medium in Eastern Europe. It was the mass medium that most closely touched the lives of most citizens. On the one hand it has increased the amount of entertainment available and thus helped depoliticize society. On the other hand, television was the medium through which communist rulers could most quickly reach large audiences. Television should not be overestimated, however. TV should no longer be seen as exceptionally persuasive despite the views of Mickiewicz and Gerbner. Their assumptions are based on earlier observations of television.

Soviet television became a mass phenomenon under the Brezhnev regime, just as it did in the United States in the Eisenhower administration. John F. Kennedy was the first television president; Gorbachev is the first Soviet television leader. Television has succeeded in penetrating the Soviet countryside in a way that radio and newspapers were never able to do. Mickiewicz commented in January 1990 how struck she was the month before as she observed interviews with the rural inhabitants of the Soviet Union with the animation they showed when talking about television. She was less clear (pending evaluation of her lengthy questionnaire) what message the peasants were receiving.

More important to this study, beginning in the early 1970s, television became the primary source of news and information in East European societies. That did not mean that
it was an effective means of propaganda, however. Heavy-handed propaganda was singularly ineffective in convincing the audience. Since the arrival of Gorbachev, Soviet television news has been modernized, and made more attractive and upbeat. But the medium is not the message. The message is the message. Television should be seen as a barometer of the extent of openness. It validates the process of glasnost and verifies its agenda. The communist regime leaderships have been unwilling to give up their monopoly on television precisely because they see the big audiences, 150 million people a night were said to watch Vremya and more than 200 million supposedly watched the first debates in the Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies. When the employees of Czechoslovak television finally managed to transmit even five minutes of one of the great November rallies on Vaclavske namesti, it provided confirmation for Czechs and Slovaks across the country that "forty years of darkness" were nearly at an end. The December 1989 revolution in Romania became visible when a rag-tag band of Romanians burst onto the screen on television.

The monopolies are coming to an end. The Polish parliament is discussing a new broadcasting bill drafted by Karel Jakubowicz, a Polish mass communications researcher. A private television channel has gone on the air in Wroclaw, Poland for several hours a day. In the Soviet Union Mikhail Nenashev, the head of Gosteleradio, said in January 1990 that there should be alternative channels available, not private
ones, but run perhaps by some of the cultural unions, such as the Union of Film Artists or the Union of Writers. No longer are all channels required to broadcast Vremya at 9 each evening. In July 1990, by decree Gorbachev ordered competition in television and radio, although within strict limits and pending the adoption of appropriate legislation. He proposed that licenses be given to local government bodies, organizations and political parties. In almost every republic seeking greater autonomy or independence in the Soviet Union, the control of television channels has been an issue. Gorbachev asserts that such claims are invalid.

Before Gorbachev, it was important to distinguish between the more political daily and sociopolitical weekly press and official radio and television from the alternative news sources. The latter included not only foreign broadcasts and publications and samizdat, but also the specialized publications, directed at small audiences, which have long contained much more detailed accurate information. Increasingly since 1988, that distinction has become clouded. For someone who has read the East European press on a fairly constant basis for nearly twenty years, the openness of the daily press is a real shock. This has not come about because of the specialized publications. Although they had more information in the past, that information was less than one often finds in today’s daily press. Have samizdat and foreign
broadcasts had an impact? Here the answer cannot be so definitive since reliable survey data are hard to come by. In Czechoslovakia this does not seem to be the case. While there was a samizdat in existence in the 1970s and 1980s, more often than not it was "published" by typing multiple copies on onion-skin paper. The Charter 77 movement issued a number of documents beginning in 1977 but with no regularity. In 1987, a group of dissident Czech and Slovak journalists started the publication of Lidove noviny, using the name that harkens back to one of the outstanding newspapers in Czech history. Lidove noviny had access to more modern technology than most samizdat publications, but the number of copies was still rather limited. After the downfall of the Communist regime, this paper started down the road to daily circulation. The samizdat publications circulated largely in Prague. These were the fleas: they could be an irritant to the regime if they got into the hands of Western reporters, and cause some scratching, but they were no more than that as information-distributing vehicles. In retrospect, to their publishers and writers they became something of a symbol of morality. 52

In Poland samizdat took on large form following their development which started in 1976. The regime, then the least secure in its home country, lacked the support to stage a fullscale crackdown. Over the next thirteen years perhaps as many as a thousand publications developed with circulations in the tens of thousands. Although Warsaw was the center of their
publication, they were to be found in many other Polish cities as well. The most famous was Tygodnik Mazowsze, the underground weekly of the Solidarity region around Warsaw following the martial law crackdown. Their primary function was usually not the presentation of information, but the discussion of ideas and pursuing debate with the regime. They also pushed the official regime press to be more open and readable. Samizdat in Poland was not an alternative press but a necessary part of the press system. Although few Poles admitted it at the time, the official Polish press was a necessary source of information. The underground press in Poland was a supplementary press, filling in gaps in news and in debate. In addition, the people who contributed to it saw themselves helping to create and become a part of, a civil society, set apart from official society. The act of participating counted for more than what they wrote.

The samizdat press in the Soviet Union has been the least influential of the three countries investigated. Circulation in the pre-Gorbachev days was limited to perhaps a thousand mostly-persecuted intellectuals and the Western press corps in Moscow. The regime prevented any further growth. Surprisingly, these publications have expanded under glasnost. They now have a much easier time arranging publication and have access to more modern printing needs. Many of them are posted outside the offices of the very liberal Novosti-owned Moscow News, on Pushkin Square, just down from MacDonalds. In late
1989 one survey found 323 different samizdat publications in the USSR. Two-thirds of these are put out by non-formal groups and the rest by independent publishers. Initially most were published in Moscow, Leningrad and the Baltic States, but since 1988 they have been published in many locations. In recent years *Glasnost’* and *Ekspress Khronika* have been the best known of these in the West, because they have carefully maintained contact with Western reporters. But with their small circulations and the wide open Soviet press, the influence of samizdat remains small. It is unclear how they will be affected by the new press law.

In the past, alternative news often came from across the borders. One of the most visible symbols of glasnost for observers in the West was the cessation of the jamming of western broadcasts to Eastern Europe. Because domestic media were becoming increasingly open and samizdat more readily available, it is unclear what impact the end of jamming had on the public consumption of news. At times the communist regimes still delayed dealing with difficult domestic issues (e.g. Nagorno-Karabakh or the earthquake in Armenia). On these occasions, foreign broadcasters were important. As the systems become more open, that was less and less the case, although listenership climbed slowly during the 1980s. Today Radio Free Europe has set up bureaus in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. But will RFE turn up much information not already available? Clearly the audience for these stations is
down. While 36 percent of the population of Czechoslovakia was listening to Western broadcasts daily on November 24, 1989, the percentage had already fallen to 15 percent by December 12.55 As early as the summer of 1989, it was clear that there was decreasing reason to maintain Radio Free Europe.56 Today it seems that Radio Free Europe will eventually be absorbed in the Voice of America.

In the past, Western correspondents in communist capitals were an important part of the media equation in communist countries. The served as an important medium for communication among various parts of the societies they were writing about, particularly in Moscow and Warsaw. What they wrote was printed and to a lesser degree broadcast to their home audiences and then picked up by one of the stations broadcasting to Eastern Europe and sent over the airwaves to the East European audience. Even though the quality of writing by foreign correspondents about these societies, particularly about the Soviet Union, has improved enormously because of openness, their role within East European societies has been greatly reduced. Today Western publications are increasingly available in all of these countries but their cost puts them beyond the reach of all but a small portion of the audience.

*   *   *

During much of the 1980s, there was extended discussion whether the development of new communication technologies posed a threat to the East European states. Dizard and Swensrud, for
instance, argued that personal commuters, videocassette recorders and other forms of modern communications would undermine the controlled Soviet system. The U.S. government, through COCOM, seemed to argue the contrary, that access to communications technology would strengthen the Soviet system. Both sides overstated their cases. Videocassette recorders and other forms of individual communication possessed the ability to jeopardize the potential monopoly impact of television because individuals had greater control over their choice of programming. VCR's present a variety of programming possibilities, especially for specific audiences, with entertainment by far the first choice.

Today technology is no longer a threat. Satellite broadcasting has increased the range of sources of news and information, including official ones. This will become even more important in the future. Poland is the best example here, but most of these societies now warmly welcome these satellite alternatives. Czechoslovakia has opened up its third television channel, which for several years had broadcast Soviet television, to half a dozen western satellite programs, including sports, news, music and entertainment offerings. A major issue visible here, but one that lurks throughout this issue is the general backwardness of technology. These societies lack the economic wherewithal to develop many of the technologies and cannot afford to import them. Soviet
authorities now allow the unlimited personal import of satellite antennas, but without hard currency resources, few citizens of the Soviet Union will be able to buy them.

*  *  *

The advent of glasnost' in the Soviet Union and the liberalization of the mass media led to substantial increases in media consumption, especially when all limits on subscriptions were removed. Newspapers in kiosks sold out early if there were even enough copies to put on sale. Second hand markets developed for the most popular publications. "People are stealing magazines from the mailboxes because they are so eager to read them," one Soviet chemist remarked. Two Soviet historians claimed they were getting two hours less sleep a night because they had so much to read. For some publications, circulations skyrocketed and media hunger developed. Under developing market conditions the public now finds itself in the unaccustomed situation of being wooed. Argumenty i fakty, the popular weekly newspaper, produced more than 30 million copies of each issue in 1990, for instance, to meet audience demand. At the same time the demand for other publications dropped because the audience was uninterested in what they offered. Pravda, no longer mandatory reading for the intelligentsia and the bureaucrats, saw its circulation plunge by nearly four million copies.

Whether before the downfall of communism in Poland and Czechoslovakia or after, anyone visiting Eastern Europe was aware that people were consuming the press and talking about
what they found there, even if what they read only confirmed something they had known before. Vzglyad, the Friday night news and opinion program on Soviet television, became a must see for the intelligentsia and their foreign guests, because it was sure to be the subject of conversation throughout the weekend and into the next week. 600 Seconds, a local Leningrad television news program, also visible in some other parts of the Soviet Union, including Moscow, became the most loved of any program. The audience was attracted by both the subjects and the far more intelligible language the stories now came in.

If audience interest was so great, surely this must prove how influential the press was. "It is simply not true that Soviet citizens knew about all the things that have been brought out by glasnost, but simply could not voice their knowledge," Paul Goble argues. He thinks that most of the people "probably" had no idea of the scale or even that certain things had actually happened. The situation is probably more complex, although good audience surveys are still lacking in the Soviet Union. Certainly where one lived was significant. In the past, people in the cities, particularly in Moscow, were better informed about events, as were better educated people. Two things are important. First, the knowledge of past events was scattered. The population did not have shared knowledge. People could not be sure if the people they saw on the street knew the same things they did. The remarkably changed content of the press thus created new communities of knowledge. To
some degrees these communities are now being fractured by the strengthened and competing communities of nation and political outlook. In the nineteenth-century United States, Democrats read Democratic newspapers and voted Democratic. Republicans read Republican papers and voted Republican. Their knowledge was not necessarily shared. A similar situation exists today in the Soviet Union. Secondly, the depth of the audience reaction to new stories also reflects the recognition that the official truth of yesterday is not the truth of today, that not only are the facts printed in the paper new, but they contradict long stated beliefs. Whenever any previously denied fact is published, it becomes an event. The facts thus have a double impact. That is why the media have seemed to be so influential. It is not the facts they present, but what those facts symbolize.

The information isolation in Poland and Czechoslovakia was not so long-lasting, and it was penetrated at various times, e.g. 1956, 1968, 1980. In each of these countries the media became progressively more interesting during the 1980s and the subject of greater discussion. Circulations rose. Curiously, however, the audience trust in the media declined during the same period.

The economic realities of the 1990s have changed or will change the size of the audience. While firm data are hard to come by, one Polish journalist estimates that the demand for newspapers in Poland has fallen by thirty to fifty percent in
one year. Another journalist referred to a "sharp decline" in circulation. At the end of 1988, 90.8 percent of Poles read newspapers. By the end of 1989, this had declined to 84.9%. Walery Pisarek, the Director of the Krakow Press Research Center, acknowledged that this decrease reflected world trends, but "nowhere else have such changes taken place in the space of only a few months." Prague newsstands that emptied rapidly in the morning during the winter of 1990 still had plenty of newspapers available at mid-day during the summer. Price increases in Hungary and Yugoslavia have led to similar declines in consumption.

Under communist rule in each of these three countries, the mass audience received far less attention than both the journalists and the party members. Theoretically journalists paid great attention to the audience because the press was supposed to help mobilize the general population to help fulfill the plan. Newspapers and radio and television broadcasters developed extensive systems for analyzing the content of letters to the editor both to measure the success of their work and to keep abreast of "public opinion." The letters certainly constituted an important vehicle of public expression at a time when the opportunities for coalesced expression of public feeling were limited. But even a rudimentary knowledge of public opinion demonstrated how unreliable an expression of public attitudes the letters were.

*  *  *  *
The development of a mass society in Eastern Europe has not yet made the consumer king, but these governments now need the audience input if they are to survive. This is being done through the development of public opinion polls, and other forms of communication with the audience.

Although at times rather limited in form, Poland nonetheless rather consistently conducted at least some public opinion research throughout Communist rule. As early as 1955, Bogdan Osolnik, a sociologist, pointed out that public opinion research helped warn that some attitudes which politicians thought were widely accepted had not been adopted by the public.64 But even the polling did not guarantee the communist rulers stability.65 In Czechoslovakia, too, roots go back at least forty years, but the institutes have had a checkered career. Their existence no longer needs to be justified. Instead it is a question of how to make them methodologically up-to-date, and precisely what purpose and whom they are to serve.

In Poland they were brought back by Wojciech Jaruzelski. There was no patron in Czechoslovakia, although party ideology chief Jan Fojtik started to take a greater interest in the findings in 1977, perhaps to ascertain how widespread was the support for Charter 77. Eleven years later he told a central committee plenum that it was important to be familiar with and analyze public opinion on a regular basis, to consider them a kind of early warning system. "They make it possible to spot
many arising contradictions and in appropriate fashion to react to them and to solve them," he said. Their use in Czechoslovakia as a force useful in policy management, that is, as feedback, rather than input, was confirmed by a poll official who said it was naive to demand that the poll results be used for changing society. "Public opinion--even when it is always necessary to take it into account--doesn't always speak the truth."67

Czechoslovakia set up its first public opinion institute, attached to the Ministry of Information, in 1946. It started publishing a journal the following year, but when the Communist Party seized power in the coup of February 1948, public opinion polling fell out of favor. As one researcher put it, no one knows if the institute was closed down in 1949 or 1950. As part of the reforms that came to be known as the Prague Spring, a new institute was set up, the Institute for the Study of Public Opinion, in 1966 at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It was not officially closed down until 1972, although it ceased to function in 1969. The present institute, the Institute for the Study of Public Opinion attached to the Federal Statistical Office, was established in 1972. Several other polling organizations sprang up in the wake of the November 1989 revolution.

Today, each of the three countries has competing public opinion institutions, some of them central and some of them regional. In some instances, there is an insufficient number
of trained specialists. In the Soviet Union it is still nearly impossible to obtain a randomly selected all-union sample. In Poland there are several institutes. The most important one has been attached to the government. There are smaller operations in the academy of sciences, in Polish radio and television and in the press research center in Krakow. The government institute was the one most like a Western institute, interested in opinions and how they were affected by events. There have been frequent attacks on their reliability and more importantly, on the use of their results.

The two most important institutions in the USSR have been the Institute of Sociology at the USSR Academy of Sciences, directed by Vladimir Yadov and the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion, directed by Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a prominent sociologist and economist. But both are in their relative infancy. Questions are often biased, questionnaires are usually in Russian (the native language of barely half the population of the Soviet Union), sampling techniques are poor, and the validity of results are often in question. One leading Soviet public opinion specialist said you really can’t trust any of the polls. 69

While some theorists believe that the newly-awakened public opinion can be harnessed to facilitate execution of policies, it is not clear that such an analysis is true. The reality is that public opinion polling is a civic institution, part of society separate from parties and governments even if
sometimes manipulated by them. While communist societies have rarely been able to ignore the public totally, it is clear that this public participation in the policy process became increasingly important in recent years. Political messages in the Soviet and East European press had become increasingly ineffective in the late Brezhnev years, the so-called period of stagnation. In the late 1980s politicians and ideologists who supported reform efforts talked about the need for the public to be promptly informed about events at home and abroad. That suggested a still undefined autonomous critical role for journalism, but it implied only a consumer role for the public, rather than a participatory role. But reform efforts led by a single party that meant only a more effectively moulded public opinion were bound to fail.

**Conclusion**

No matter what kind of public relations activities are established in these countries to help deal with public opinion, they will be severely tested during the transition to a market economy. Media officials had been aware since the early 1980s about the need to be more sensitive to public opinion. There were increasing examples of having to bow before the pressure of public opinion. But as long as a single party was in power, the opportunities for response were limited. The huge throngs of people in the streets of Leipzig, Prague and Bucharest changed all that. This was a kind of proto-democracy. For a moment the voice of the people was the
They were unified, however, only in their hatred for the old. Despite the fact that the press in these countries today is much more readable and much more interesting, the public still believes the media fail to represent their interests. If society can develop the appropriate democratic mechanisms combining responsibility and interest, that will not be important. Only in Czechoslovakia and to a lesser degree in Hungary, do journalists seem to be identifying with the public. When several political parties in Czechoslovakia tried to rein in their newspapers after the parties did poorly in the June elections, journalists fought back. Reporters at Svobodne slovo declared they were on strike and vowed not to give in until their editor, who had been fired, was returned to duty. After the crisis passed, the staff remained on "strike alert" until the relationship between the paper and the Czechoslovak Socialist Party was resolved. The Syndicate of Czech Journalists expressed disappointment that "even the decisive political strengths in our land do not yet fully realize the mission and place of the mass media in a modern democratic society where they are not understood as the subservient instrument of powerful interests, but as one of the guarantees of the healthy development of society."

Already in the spring of 1989 it was clear that the newspapers and broadcast media were not effective change agents in a time of rapid change in Eastern Europe. Their role and influence in society was too gradual, and it was easy for the
pace of change to outrun them. While communists still ruled in Poland and Czechoslovakia some of their leaders urged a greater openness for the media than most media were willing to follow, especially because the editors and journalists were aware that many party leaders were unwilling to let up on the reins of control.

While certain Soviet newspapers helped overturn planned limits of periodical circulation during the fall of 1989, that was an exception to the rule of impact. This was a clear black-and-white issue where pressure could be applied. In most issues that was not true. The most important role for the Soviet press remains one of legitimation, of confirming that change is taking place.

Most of the formerly communist societies and the Soviet Union as well have not yet decided what place the media should hold. Press laws will not determine media behavior. Following the period of reconstruction, these societies are likely to emerge with a press that is generally less politicized, more open, more entertaining, and attuned to large changes in public attitude. Depending on changes in the training and socialization of journalists, professionalism is likely to assume greater importance. As the news leaders in these societies accommodate themselves to this development, and recognize that the media are no longer mass mobilizers or agents of policy, they will be able to harness the media for their own purposes. The question is whether the media will oppose that and try to become independent watchdogs.
The result will be a system that is participatory, democratic if you will, but still very much subject to the efforts of government and party control, should the regimes have the desire and ability to apply them.
In addition to the usual written sources, this essay draws extensively from several dozen wide ranging interviews with media officials in Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union, conducted from March to May 1989 and in March, June and July 1990.

B.M. Morozov, V.E. Fadeev and V.V. Shinkarenko, Planirovanie ideologicheskoi raboty: nekotorye voprosy teorii i praktiki (Moscow: Mysl, 1980), p. 185. Much of this TASS content was news of official matters.

Pravda, 11 and 12 December 1984.

Columbia Journalism Review rejected a brief manuscript that noted Gorbachev’s remarks, observing that it was necessary to see whether words became deeds.


Thomas F. Remington, "Gorbachev and the Strategy of Glasnost’," in Remington, ed., Politics and the Soviet System: Essays in Honour of Frederick C. Barghoorn (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), pp. 56-82, provides data on editor turnover that suggests that Gorbachev was already initiating changes even before Chernobyl.


See Owen V. Johnson, "Newspapers and Nation-Building:

67 Jacek and Vanek, Ibid.

68 The name was changed from Bureau to Institute in 1978.

